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BRITISH COLUMBIA ActNow

NEWS RELEASE

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Sept. 4, 2007

Ministry of Education
Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts

B.C. SETS NATIONAL STANDARD IN PROMOTING STUDENT HEALTH

VANCOUVER – The Province will require 30 minutes of daily physical activity for students and is also fast-tracking the removal of junk food in schools with Canada's most aggressive initiative yet to fight obesity in children and youth, Education Minister Shirley Bond and ActNow BC Minister Gordon Hogg announced today.

"One in four of our children is now overweight or obese. For their future, and for the future of our province, this must change," said Bond. "By removing junk food sales in schools, and by requiring that B.C.'s students have daily physical activity, we are helping to create a culture of health in our schools and for our children."

"Every move is a good move, and we have to move now to turn back the tide of obesity in B.C.," said Hogg. "We are now seeing more and more children, even the very young, with type 2 Diabetes and heart disease and those numbers are growing. Our schools are a vital link in demonstrating to families that healthy choices in physical activity and nutrition can really improve their children's quality of life."

By removing junk food and mandating physical activity for all K-12 students, British Columbia will have the highest school health standards in Canada to address the issue of childhood obesity. With full implementation of these programs across all schools by September 2008, these ActNowBC strategies help support the Province's Pacific Leadership Agenda of improving health for British Columbians and renewing the public health-care system.

"Healthy and active children are teachable children," said Les Dukowski, president of the B.C. Principals and Vice-Principals Association. "Principals and vice-principals are committed to the well-being of students in our schools, and these initiatives address the need to reverse the disturbing trends of obesity and lack of exercise in our children and youth."

Supports to promote student health include:

- Revised Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools that mandate no sales of foods in the "not recommended" and "choose least" categories for elementary schools by January 2008 and for middle and secondary schools by September 2008. The revised guidelines align with the new Canada Food Guide.

- Daily physical activity in every school and for every student by September 2008. K-9 students will do at least 30 minutes each day and grades 10-12 will do at least 150 minutes each week. During the 2007-08 school year, a number of early leader schools across B.C. will be testing this process in advance of daily physical activity's full implementation.

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- The ActNow BC website will help schools, students and parents understand some of the healthy options currently available to them. This website will also capture the best ideas from schools on activity programs, as well as questions and comments from the public. Over the next year, the ActNow BC website will be further developed to meet the needs of the new physical activity initiative in schools. Visit the ActNow BC website and the Activity Challenge at www.actnowbc.ca.

- Healthy Living Guides for Families – Parents of every school-aged child have received a booklet with tips and ideas on how to help their child and family be physically active and eat nutritiously. Four different booklets have been produced in English, French and 11 other languages, for grades K-3, 4-7, 8-9 and 10-12. The Healthy Living Guides and the Revised Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools can be accessed online at: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/health_publications.htm

"The health and well-being of our children is becoming almost as important as their achievement" says Kim Howland, president of the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils. "BCCPAC is pleased that the Province is moving to ensure a healthier environment for our schools and children."

"We know that physically active students learn better and achieve more," said Perry Kendall, B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer. "If we can help students build good health habits while they are young, their chances of living healthier and longer lives are much higher."

To further promote healthy choices and lifestyles in children and youth, the Province also introduced legislation to ban tobacco use on school grounds and around buildings used for educational purposes, effective September 2007.

ActNow BC is a partnership-based cross-ministry health and wellness initiative that promotes healthy living choices to improve the quality of life for all British Columbians.

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2 backgrounder(s) attached.

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DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GETS KIDS MOVING

- Daily physical activity will be implemented for all students in B.C. by September 2008.
- On Aug 22, Canadian Medical Association resolutions from the Annual General Meeting called on all levels of government to implement mandatory physical activity for a minimum of 30 minutes a day during school hours for all school-aged children and youth.
- Thirty minutes each day is a good first step: students are encouraged to be active for more than just the minimum daily activity time.
- B.C. schools will offer 30 minutes of physical activity programs each day, whether during class or break time. Students may also use non-school activities such as sports groups, dance classes, cycling or swimming to complete their required 30 minutes each day.
- Students in half-day kindergarten classes will have 15 minutes of required activity in their school day instead of 30 minutes.
- The ministry will work closely with educators at early leader schools around the province to develop teaching resources for all grades.
- Students in grades 10-12 will need to complete 150 minutes of activity per week as a part of the Graduation Transitions program.
- Physically active time during physical education (PE) class will count toward the daily 30-minute requirement.
- The resources for grades K-9 will help support schools in their capacity to lead elementary and middle school students through physical activities to achieve their 30 minutes of activity a day.

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NEW SCHOOL RULES REMOVE JUNK FOOD

- One in four B.C. children and youth is obese or overweight (Stats Canada).
- The federal standards for food served to children and youth over the age of two, revised in the 2007 Canada's Food Guide, recommend much lower fat, salt and sugar levels.
- B.C. is issuing Revised Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools that align with these new standards. According to the revised guidelines, foods and drinks are placed into four categories: choose most, choose sometimes, choose least, and not recommended.
- These standards mandate what foods can be sold in B.C. schools, including vending, cafeteria and fundraising sales.
- The revised guidelines place more foods into the "not recommended" and "choose least" categories.
- Under the previous guidelines, schools were required to end the sale of food and beverages in the "not recommended" category by September 2009.
- The revised guidelines end the sale of food and beverages in the "not recommended" and "choose least" categories by January 2008 for elementary schools, and by September 2008 for middle and secondary schools.
- "Not Recommended" foods tend to be highly processed, or have very high amounts of sweeteners, salt, caffeine, fat, trans fat or calories relative to their nutritional value. Sugar may be the first ingredient or the second ingredient after water. Examples include:
    - most pop and sport drinks,
    - all artificially sweetened foods and drinks (elementary and middle schools only),
    - many deep fried foods,
    - very high fat, sugary or salty pastries,
    - many regular canned soups,
    - most French fries,
    - some pizzas (e.g. double cheese style),
    - all regular coffee and tea drinks,
    - most regular packages of candy or chocolate,
    - some sugary cereals,
    - high-fat, high-salt potato or other chips, and
    - many decaffeinated coffee or tea drinks with milk and sugar.

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- "Choose Least" foods may be low in key nutrients such as iron and calcium, and may be highly salted, sweetened or processed. Examples include:
    - most cakes or pastries, cookies and muffins,
    - most regular tomato or vegetable juices,
    - some higher-fat cheeses,
    - many energy bars with added fats, "low-carb" bars, and bars with sugar as the first ingredient,
    - most bagged corn or wheat snacks,
    - most very small packages of candy,
    - many high-sodium canned soups,
    - most instant soups,
    - most pasta salads,
    - most meat pot pies,
    - some pizzas (e.g. meat lovers style), and
    - some sugary cereals.

- The guidelines are available to the public on the ministry's website at: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/health_publications.htm

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